Welcome to the book of Judges. This week, and this is the “Bible in Five” to cover the book of Judges. The book of Judges is kind of a depressing read. There are not a lot of high points in the book and that is kind of the point. The book has a whole is exploring the corruption, the sin, the selfishness of the people of Israel and of the human heart and what happens to the whole society and when people are so broken.

So you remember the context of this part of the story. The people are now are brought in to the Promised Land under Joshua and they are living in the land. That’s what chapters 1-3 kind give you the setting of the book. While the people of Israel were able to drive out some of the Canaanites who are living in the Promised Land, chapter 1 sits there and tells you they did not drive out all of them. Many, many Canaanites were still left in the land. The whole point of driving the Canaanites out was the Canaanites were morally corrupt people. They worshiped number of other gods and the way of worshiping those gods was involved in child sacrifice and sexual rituals and so on. So they didn’t drive out many of those peoples and so the people of Israel began to worship those gods and to practice the same kinds of lifestyles as the Canaanites. So this whole problem that is set up for us in the first few chapters here where they don’t drive out the Canaanites and therefore they become morally corrupt themselves.

So they are living in the land and these chapters from the introduction. They introduce you to a pattern that the people of Israel are going to go through many times. Namely that they sin, they follow the lifestyle of the Canaanites in some way, so as a result of their sin, God allows them to fall under the oppression of different Canaanite rulers or leaders or whatever. So then the people see the error of their ways. They call out in repentance. Yahweh raises up deliverance or a deliverer for them. These deliverers are called “judges.” The judges save them through battle or something then bring a time of peace only to have the people sin again, live like the Canaanites, and the cycle goes on
and on. The whole body of the book from chapters 3 through 16 is Israel repeating this cycle over and over again, nearly ten times.

The deliverer, the judge who God raises up to rescue the people, changes so it begins with a story about the guy named Ehud, who is kind of the really violent, gory story, middle school boys will love this story about Ehud. It has violence and murder and stabbing and blood and everything. But you know as you go on through the story, the judges who are not like people who sit at benches with gavels and like sitting in the court room. Judges was Israelite name for military ruler or military chief who raise up to rescue the people.

So every deliverer becomes a worse and worse kind of person. So Ehud he is okay, he is clever. Then you get a guy named Gideon and he is pretty good, but he makes some really horrible, horrible mistakes. You have a guy named Jephthah here who sacrifices his own daughter. He thinks that Yahweh is a Canaanites god who wants him to sacrifice his child. Then the last deliverer is Samson, who, chapters 13 through 16 are dedicated to him. He is horrible person beginning to end but God uses him even despite his sin to bring deliverance for the people. So this whole section of the book is just showing you how horrible things have gotten in Israel. They live like Canaanites. There is no difference from the Canaanites. They are not faithful to the covenant. They don’t remember God’s grace. They are living however they want to. It is really kind of depressing.

So the last few chapters of the book here 17 through 21 have a key phrase that is repeated four different times. It reminds you that while they had judges and rulers, Israel has gotten out of control and their sin and there is no king, there is no one ruler, who can bring justice or establishing justice and goodness to remind the people of the covenant. It is just the heyday.

These last chapters of the book of judges are not for the faint of heart. They are violent, they are bloody, they are gory, and they will horrify you. That’s their point is like watching a movie like the “God Father” that there is just watching people destroy themselves essentially. So that’s what these stories do. They essentially tell you that both
terms of their religious devotions and in their moral character of Israelites are corrupt and falling apart. They may need a king.

So the book ends on a pretty dark note that’s saying that the people of Israel are doing whatever they want and they have no king to rule them. This is a perfect set up to the books are going to follow. The book of Ruth tells you the lineage of the King David and then the book of Samuel which also all about the rise of the kings and people of Israel.

So the book of Judges tells you about the cycle of God’s people. If you can’t find your own story in this cycle right here, you are just not paying attention. Really! So this very much the story meant to help us explore the broken of our own hearts, about God’s faithfulness to deliverer us even when we fall into sin and its consequences. Ultimately, it is a book pointing us to God grace in providing a king who will lead his people into what is right and what is just.

So hope this helped for you and there is the book of Judges. See you next time.

Transcribed by Peter Bakhit
Rough edited by Ted Hildebrandt